



# U.S. Food Waste Challenge

Reduce, Recover, Recycle

**Organization(s):** Connecticut Department of Energy & Environmental Protection (DEEP)

**City, State:**

**Website:** <http://www.ct.gov/deep/OfficeComposting>

**What are the reduction, recovery or recycling activities?**

## Objective

Reduce waste; Increase recycling; Show leadership in pollution prevention, source reduction, and environmental stewardship; Educate employees, visitors, and building managers about on-site composting in an office setting; Advance the goals of our department's Solid Waste Management Plan, Energy Conservation Plan and Model Agency Initiatives for Pollution Prevention, Source Reduction & Recycling.

**Timeline:** Continue to divert from disposal and compost on-site 6,000 lbs (3 tons) of food scrap/soiled paper and 2,430 lbs (1.2 tons) of wood shavings per year.

Continue with our successful on-site office food scrap composting program.

In September 1997, DEEP initiated an on-site food scrap composting program for our six story office building with 766 employees located in the Hartford capitol district. We were the first government agency in the country (as best we could determine) to compost food scraps on-site. There are break rooms on each floor, but no cafeteria. Employees bring in their own lunch either from home, or from truck vendors. Occasionally there are catered food events, such as holiday or retirement celebrations. After a 1-year demonstration with a backyard compost bin, an in-vessel institutional-scale composting system with mechanical turning mechanism and biofilter was installed behind the building. All post consumer food scraps, including meat and dairy, are composted, as well as brown paper towels from break rooms. Wood shavings from our sawmill are used as bulking agent. Everything about this project - collection, weighing, depositing, turning, harvesting, troubleshooting, data collection, and maintenance is accomplished by volunteer staff: a.k.a the "Organic Mechanics".

In June 2001, the one task of collecting organics from break rooms was transferred to building management upon renewal of their contract. Daily weighing by staff ceased, but was offset by the ability to integrate organics collection into the building management contract, similar to their duties for recycling and trash collection. It made the program more sustainable and placed fewer burdens on volunteer staff. The remainder of the program is still performed by volunteers. Employee education is done through voice mail, email, signage and a series of web pages on our internal website. Ours is truly a closed loop system, meaning we generate the scraps, compost them on-site, and use the compost in flower gardens at our office and in state parks. We divert from disposal 6,000 lbs/yr (3 tons) of food scrap and soiled paper; and 2,430 lbs/yr (1.2 tons) of wood shavings.

As of November 2013 we have diverted about 74 tons of organics, avoided \$3,614 in disposal fees and saved \$1,880 in soil amendment purchases. Employees have earned 2 distinguished service awards for this program, and it has served as an education tool for staff, stakeholders, and visitors during CT Recycle Day, Earth Day, and Green Team events. For more information, please visit [www.ct.gov/deep/OfficeComposting](http://www.ct.gov/deep/OfficeComposting) or contact the project manager, K.C. Alexander, CT DEEP at 860-424-3239 [kathy.alexander@ct.gov](mailto:kathy.alexander@ct.gov)